



St. Michael's Church  
CHARLESTON, SC

SUNDAY, MAY 24, 2020

ISAIAH 6:1-8  
LUKE 5:1-11

PREACHER: THE REV. AL ZADIG, JR.

*HELP US LORD TO BE SO CONNECTED TO YOU THAT WE MIGHT BECOME YOUR  
DISCIPLES AND THE SERVANTS OF OTHERS.*

*TAKE OUR LIPS AND SPEAK THROUGH THEM,  
OUR MINDS AND THINK THROUGH THEM,  
AND TAKE OUR HEARTS, AND SET THEM ON FIRE.*

This past week, my wife and I celebrated our 25<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary, but just 2 months into our marriage I wasn't sure if we were going to make it. Let me take you to a summer day in 1995. It was a beautiful Saturday, and in our newly married state, we were with friends swimming off a dock on the Stono River on John's Island. I jump in the water and as I come up the ladder, my brand new, glistening, golden, glowing wedding ring is gone. It slipped off my finger into the pluff mud where boat engines, entire boats for that matter, go to die and are never seen again. My wife breaks into tears...we're doomed! An early catastrophe! For the next 4 hours, we fish for it by adding a rope and weight to a net, throwing it into the river, scouring the pluff mud, pulling it up, hosing it down, and praying for a miracle. Hour upon hour of fruitless fishing...and a marriage with an early chink in the armor.

Well, let me take you from the Stono to the Lake of Gennesaret...or what we call the Sea of Galilee for a good old fashioned fishing story with Jesus. For all Fishermen-Fisherwomen, this story is for you. The Sea of Galilee is 76 miles due north of Jerusalem. It's not really a sea, more like a large lake, 13 miles long, 8 miles wide, with 9 townships with 150,000 people living on its shores. The lake was THE water source for the entire

region. But most importantly, Luke 5 is the fork in the road for Jesus. It opens with Jesus preaching at the lake. Why was he there? Jesus had been preaching in the Jerusalem synagogue, but because of the radical nature of his teaching, *that* was becoming less and less possible.

So Jesus makes a pivot by taking the ministry out and to the people! Jesus pivots from buildings to meeting the people where they lived, worked, and played! His church would now be The Lakeside. As author David Jeremiah writes, the shoreline becomes His pews and the boat His pulpit. The water IS His Cathedral! In other words, the Sea of Galilee wasn't just the water source for Galilee, but the source of the water of life for the world!

On this particular Day, and like any good sermon, Jesus wants action! And so, after the sermon from the boat, Jesus, to challenge Peter's faith, yells out, "Peter...Take your boat into the deep over there and go fishing." Peter hears the post sermon call to action and says, "No." Tough Crowd! *"Master, we're exhausted, we just got in after fishing all night and caught nothing, not even a minnow!"*

Now behind the scenes, here's what's going on. Peter is trying to be polite saying, *"Jesus, we know a bit more about fishing than you do. Fishing in daytime on the Sea of Galilee, is not done. The best fishing is at night."* In other words: *Jesus-stay in your lane. You stick to carpentry. I'll be the fishing guy*

But then Peter looks at Jesus again. Perhaps it was the Holy Spirit...Peter gets a change of heart. *OKAY Jesus I don't understand but if you say so, we will.* Peter goes out, and throws the net into the deep. The rest is history. Instant fish. Tilapia by the BUSHEL. Carp by the BARREL. Sardines by the BOXLOAD! All the sardines you could dream of! I mean the Rev. David Booman would be in heaven! Sardines for life!

So many fish that two big problems emerge! The nets begin to tear, so another boat comes and splits the load. But then both boats begin to sink under the weight with all those sardines, carp and tilapia! IMAGINE...How many sardines would be required to sink a boat? This is supernatural my friends.

Freeze here for a moment... Have you ever witnessed something so beautiful that time just froze? The first time you saw the Grand Canyon? The Sunrise from our Bell Tower? Frozen because you realize the greatness of what your eyes are communicating with you. This is Peter! In this moment, Peter cries out absolutely overwhelmed by two things: the divine power and Goodness of Jesus Christ, and his sinfulness, his cynical doubting habit! Peter comes to terms with his finite ability and the infinite power and sufficiency of Jesus. Which leads Peter to fall down, weep, and say, *"Jesus, leave me, I'm a doubting sinner, I can't handle your holiness."* Jesus looks at Peter and says, "Now that you know that...I can use you.

Fear Not...I'm changing the very purpose of your life. You thought you were going to be a fisherman. Pivot with me to become a fisher of hearts. You see, Jesus had already called

Peter before Luke 5, but Peter got distracted and returned to his business. In order to get his full attention, Jesus performs this fishing miracle.

My friends, this fishing story has everything to do with our lives. There is no doubt in my mind that we in the western church have gotten distracted with what our true purpose is. God is stripping away those things to say, Church, get back to the prime purpose of the church: Evangelism! Discipleship! Fishing for the souls of others!

How? Luke 5 teaches three critical pivots we as the church must make. The Jesus Pivot to the country. The Peter Pivot to the deep. The Purpose Pivot to fishing for people.

First, The Jesus Pivot. In the first pivot, Jesus removed from the buildings of the Synagogue. Jesus sees the countryside as a worship sanctuary. For us that means Pivoting to Reclaim our everyday places as Holy Spaces. In this pandemic Jesus has been teaching that our homes must be worship sanctuaries. Jesus deploying you from these pews to reclaim your home for Him! Doing what you're doing now! Using your living room as a cathedral! Jesus is saying, "Take the walls down: church here on Sunday, work there on Monday, dinner at home on Tuesday. NOOOOOO. Pivot to seeing your house, your office, and the grocery store as a little church. Your bedroom as chapel. The living room as sanctuary. The dining room as pulpit. This is the Jesus pivot into the home.

Everyday PLACES AS HOLY SPACES!

Second, the Peter Pivot into the deep. Peter had to depart from the traditional fishing method to fish out of his comfort zone. Now the traditional church growth method is to open the doors and hope people will come in, a tempting traditional strategy especially here in such a beautiful church. But that's kind of like going fishing and expecting fish to JUMP into your boat, rather than fishing for them! The church has to go out into the deep and meet people where they are. Church here meaning You and Me.

I'm thrilled to tell you that a recent study tells us that the church in our country is now producing more media than Hollywood! Pivot of pivots! While Hollywood is virtually shut down, the Church is ramping up media production to the highest levels in history. Live streaming worship services, producing short videos, impromptu Facebook and Instagram videos, webinars, and more – YES! Churches and ministries are pivoting, including your own vestry, which unanimously pivoted to install permanent live stream cameras to make sure, that Even when we're back for "in-person" worship, we will always provide worship online, thereby fishing and casting the widest net to the deepest of places. This is a game changer for your clergy as well, pivoting by recording Sunday worship on Wednesdays, preaching before empty pews where no one laughs at our bad jokes. It is so strange!

But it's also going to mean a pivot for you watching right now! In a touch of God's humor...When you come back, you probably won't be able to sit in your same pew, whether it's in the front, back, upstairs, or downstairs. And yes, Chapel folks, you need to come into the sanctuary. Ushers are going to seat you in social distanced pews you've

never sat in. It sounds mundane but again one more way God is saying to the church...PIVOT! I'm shaking you up!

But let's go FURTHER INTO THE DEEP. When was the last time you went out fishing in the deep, risking rejection by inviting another to church? Sharing your faith with another? Here are some tangible ways to go into the deep. Hosting a virtual watch party for church! Getting friends together on zoom, downloading the video service, and watching it together! Watching as a life group! Watching with your unchurched neighbors! Inviting others to our first re-opening service!

This is a time to grow the Kingdom, grow church! Yes, my friends, go into the deep by inviting your friends who are disconnected and walking away from God to our Wednesday night teachings. And guess what...It doesn't matter where they live! My father lives in New England and is joining us every Wednesday Morning for Theology over Coffee, on zoom! Parishioners from our church in DC are joining us for our heaven talks on Wednesday nights!

Go into the deep by recording your Christian testimony and sharing it on Facebook live and Instagram. Go into the deep by Life groups going together to help serve in places like Tri-Country Family Ministries!

The Jesus Pivot to the countryside, everyday places as holy spaces!  
The Peter Pivot to the deep

And finally, the Purpose Pivot. Peter, in making the pivot to the deep, discovers the purpose for his very life! Jesus pivots Peter's purpose from fishing for the fish, to fishing for hearts and souls! BUT here's the thing: Peter's purpose pivots not out of duty or because he feels obligated or guilty. Peter's purpose pivots out of a heart change! How? When Peter sees God's greatness, it magnifies his own inadequacy and sinfulness. That's when his purpose changes. It wasn't in trying harder, it was in surrendering harder! He comes face to face with the greatness of God and simultaneously his own sin. It leads him to say, "I can't do this Lord!" That's when Jesus steps in, changes his heart, and pivots his purpose!

God can use Peter because Peter knows he needs God, and not the other way around. God doesn't need people who will direct Him, but people who will say, "Jesus only if you go before me." Which proves that Jesus doesn't call Peter or you and me to pivot to the deep because of what we bring to the table. He knows we don't have what it takes. Evangelism doesn't come naturally to anyone. He pivots Peter's purpose because Peter is totally dependent on Him to equip Him and give him the words. The best pre-requisite for the purpose pivot is realizing that "Jesus doesn't call the qualified, he qualifies those whom he chooses." As you heard last week from Randy, humility is the elevator to God's greatness.

The Jesus Pivot - making the everyday holy  
The Peter Pivot - getting deep in the hearts of others  
The Purpose Pivot - surrendering to be equipped by Jesus.

And so my friends, if Jesus seems distant to you now, if you feel empty Or your ministry seems like it's lacking fish, you are too close to shore. Take a risk! Pivot your home. Pivot to the deep! Fish for souls! The power of Jesus is sufficient for Peter, and you and me! The time is now!

It's not business as usual. The Church around the world today is in a gigantic pandemic pivot. While Jesus doesn't cause all hurt, he will never waste it. Jesus is using this Pandemic to Pivot the church, to wake us up to reach people not yet here! Linda Prince wrote a "White Paper" on what she sees as our Charleston reality. Linda writes:

Consider how Charleston has changed. Boeing has a fleet where 80% of their planes are parked. Supply chains are still broken. 62% of small business owners believe they will be out of business in 6 months. Charleston's tourism industry is on sabbatical. King Street shops seem to be disappearing. The "childcare" infrastructure is gone. Commercial property values are nosediving. Can our Restaurants survive at 50% capacity? Not to mention what the pandemic has done to education at all levels, and even marriages! It's hardly business as usual...

Jesus pivots. Peter Pivots. Our purpose must pivot.

Finally, back to the wedding ring in the Stono. Like Peter we were exhausted, fishing with no luck in the pluff mud filled river. The sun is going down and as frustrated as we all were, I felt the Holy Spirit gently pivot me to throw the net in on the other side of the dock. I throw the net out, scrape the pluff mud, and as we raise the net, and in a visual I will never forget, complete with the orange-y sunset behind it, was my golden ring in the net. Marriage saved by the pivot!

Maybe that ring is your friend you've given up on. Through the Holy Spirit, make the Jesus Pivot, the Peter Pivot into the deep, and there you will find your purpose forever changed. Let us pray.